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THE IRISH CHURCH.

WHO ARE THE "IRISH PEOPLE?"

The Question of the Day, "HOME RULE."

An Address Delivered by Lord Plunkett, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, to the Clergy of his Diocese,
November the 2nd, 1886.

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THE IRISH CHURCH.

DUBLIN, TUESDAY, NOV. 2.—To-day his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin held a visitation of the clergy of the Diocese of Dublin, in Christ Church Cathedral. The visitation was preceded by Divine service.

The following members of the Chapter were present in their surplices :—The Archdeacon of Dublin, the Archdeacon of Glendalough, Rev. Canon Ryder, sub-dean ; Rev. Dr. Monahar, precentor ; Rev. Dr. Marrable, treasurer ; Rev. Cannons Greene, Hamilton, Galbraith, Wynne, Bagot, Morgan, Jellett, Russell, and Staveley. There was a large attendance of the general clergy. After Divine service,

HIS GRACE delivered a charge, in which he said—Reverend and dear brethren, in prospect of the delivery of my present address, I have considered it my duty to study carefully the charges delivered by my honored and beloved predecessor during his lengthened episcopate. And deeply thankful do I feel that I undertook the task. The retrospect presented by that interval of dangerous transition, when, amid painful anxieties, restless misgivings, and heated controversies, order was seen gradually emerging out of chaos, furnished in itself a study full of interest and suggestive of lessons too. The feature in this record of the past which, as I studied my predecessor's charges, impressed itself most strongly upon my mind, and which I desire especially to mention this day, was the noble bearing of the late Archbishop in the midst of those perilous and troublous times.

DANGERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Brethren, a time may be coming when the love which each one of us bears to our Church may be put to the test. It is true, as I have said, that, from the special dangers which threatened us during the last fifteen years of my predecessor's episcopate, we are now comparatively safe ; but an ordeal of an entirely different character may be before us in the future, and it is well that we should contemplate such a possibility, and prepare to meet it. The ordeal of the past consisted in a subversal of the external constitution of our Church. Her outward fabric was laid suddenly in ruins, and we had to build it up anew. Christian fidelity was needed, in order that we might not, while so doing, endanger her essential foundations, or allow the superstructure to deviate from the ancient model. Christian unity was needed, in order that we might not, in the hour of disheartenment and confusion, break away one from another, and form separate camps. Through God's mercy, our fidelity and our unity stood the test, and as regards soundness in the faith and unity amongst ourselves, our Church may now, thank God, compare, as I verily believe, with any Church in Christendom. But the ordeal that may possibly await us in the future differs, as I have said, from that through which we have just passed. If it comes, it will meet us from without, rather than from within. It will threaten the political and social fabric of our country rather than the doctrine or the integrity of our Church. It is indeed well, when going forth to meet this danger,

that we should be clad in the armour of faith, and that we should have closed up our ranks ; but we shall need more than fidelity to Church doctrine, or unity among Church members. If in calling ourselves the Church of Ireland, we claim something beyond a mere name—if we accept with that name the responsibility that it involves, then we have a plain duty to discharge towards our country at large, and any political or social changes that may effect, for better or worse, the welfare of our native land must have an interest in our eyes quite apart from their bearing upon the financial prosperity of our Church. In other words, we must add to our Christian faithfulness and Christian unity a Christian love for our country, and a Christian interest in the social welfare of its people. If we are to march abreast of these stirring times, we must be prepared to show by our bearing and by our teaching what true Christian Patriotism and true Christian Socialism really mean as distinguished from the painful caricatures of these principles that meet us too often on every side. I assume, dear brethren, that no arguments are needed in order to persuade any of you that such a responsibility as I have described does really rest upon our Church. I am sure, too, that no persuasion is needed in order that you may accept it as your own. But in order that we may all the more vividly realise the urgency of our duties in this respect, I would venture to pursue this thought somewhat further to-day.

TITLE OF "CHURCH OF IRELAND."

And with such a view, the first question that stands, as it were, on the threshold is this—What is our position in this land? We call ourselves the "Church of Ireland"—what do we mean by such words? It is not for the purpose of assailing others that I deal with the question. It is from a simple desire that we ourselves, with God's blessing, may be edified and encouraged and fortified in the discharge of our own duties, at a time when every such help is sorely needed—at a time, moreover, when we ourselves are driven into an attitude of self-defence. Nor do we ask for ourselves that which we are unwilling to concede to others. Let others come forward and prove, if they wish, their right to the position we claim. We invite honest criticism, and are fearless as to the result.

WHO ARE THE "IRISH PEOPLE?"

But it may be said—Why proceed further with this inquiry? Why claim for your Church the title of the Church of Ireland, when you yourselves have no right to be considered as a portion of the "Irish people?" That such a misgiving should be possible may at first sight appear strange; and yet when we find not only the so-called National Press in this country but even the leading journals at the other side of the channel continually making use of the term "Irish people" as applicable to one section only of the inhabitants of Ireland; when we find eminent men of letters building up splendid ethnological theories upon mere hearsay in their studies, whereby this land is divided into three partitions—the home of the Scotch Presbyterian in the North, of the English Churchman in the East, and of the Irish Roman Catholic in the West and South—it is time to explain that which all who really know anything of his country well know—namely, that in Ireland, as in England, the population represents a compound *stratum* of national life, formed by the fusion of many races. Our geographical position as an

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island close to England's side has invited many strangers, whether as settlers, invaders, or, alas! as agitators, to visit our shores; and, as a consequence, the blood of many nations—Celtic, Saxon, Danish, Norman, Spanish, French, and Scottish—has been inextricably intermingled in the veins of our ancestry. The result is that, though some of these ancestral types of physiognomy and character may still display themselves here and there with more or less predominance, the people as a whole are now an "Irish people," and nothing else. No section, whether geographical, political, or religious, has a right to claim that designation for itself. By way of example, I may state that representatives of all the more ancient families of Ireland—the O'Haras, the O'Mulloys, the M'Dermot Roes, the O'Donnells, the O'Neills, the M'Gillicuddys, Mahons, M'Namaras, Malones, O'Briens (from Brian Boroinhe), O'Reillys of Breffny, M'Carthys, and others—are to be found among the leading members of our Church. While, on the other hand, the Ironsides of Cromwell have their descendants among the Roman Catholic peasantry of Tipperary. Let me, in passing, refute another widespread misconception, to the effect that our Church has little or no standing ground outside the province of Ulster. As a matter of fact, more than a quarter of a million members of our Church are to be found in the three southern provinces. In our own diocese of Dublin alone there are at least 100,000. But if it be thus clear that Irish Churchmen are not strangers and foreigners in their own land, and that they form a considerable portion of the "Irish people"—all the more considerable if education and culture and property are to count for anything—the question still remains, What claim has their Church to the title of "The Church of Ireland?" Long usage and parliamentary sanction are no doubt valuable accessories in establishing our case. But our claim rests on more solid foundations than even these. We make it because we believe that our Church is the only legitimate successor and representative of that ancient Church established fourteen hundred years ago in this land by St. Patrick—a Church to which the title of "Church of Ireland" has never been by any refused. That Church was an Episcopal Church. St. Patrick himself was a bishop, and consecrated bishops in every place where he desired to give permanency to his work. As regards the Church of Rome in Ireland, her present episcopate derives its continuity from bishops introduced into this country in the sixteenth century. I do not deny the validity of their orders; but they are not derived from the ancient Church of Ireland. Again, the ancient Church of Ireland was free from Papal control. The ancient Church of Ireland was never committed to those dangerous innovations with which Rome has overlaid the Primitive Faith. It is true that as the centuries rolled on "the foreign doctrine," spoken of by Archbishop Usher, made its way gradually into our Church, and the history of the 350 years which intervened between the Synod of Cashel and the Reformation is, indeed, a dreary one; but, even during that interval, the Church of Ireland never formally adopted that "foreign doctrine" as her own. It remained the old Church still. The new Church that then found place in this land was in reality the Church of Rome, which, after the Reformation, having adopted the novel creed of Pope Pius IV., introduced its bishops—some from Spain, and some from Italy—and placed them in the sees already occupied by Irish prelates. These are facts which, as I believe, defy contradiction, and if

they be true, then again I repeat—the old Church is the Church of Ireland; the new Church is the Church of Rome. Such is the history—such the distinctive character of the ancient Irish Church.

PATRIOTISM—A COMMON MEETING GROUND.

My reverend brethren, I have ventured this day into the field of controversy, not, God knoweth, for controversy's sake. My real motive for dealing with this question has been a very different one. But chiefly it has been my earnest desire, by recalling our minds this day to the position which, as Irishmen and as Irish Churchmen, we occupy in our fatherland, to kindle, or when kindled to strengthen, in each heart a flame of true Christian patriotism.

PATRIOTISM ABOVE SELF-INTEREST.

Let patriotism take the place of self-interest. We are, of course, not only allowed, we are bound to assert and defend our own rights; and they who weakly yield them up to the aggressor are the enemies of the common good. But there are times when the welfare of the country demands a sacrifice—a sacrifice, it may be, of ease, or money, or fondly-cherished homes. Let it be known to all men that a love of country is the master-principle which constrains us—in other words, that in the presence of patriotism self-interest is prepared to take a lower place.

THE PRESENT CRISIS.

But, let us bring these thoughts to bear more immediately on the requirements of this present time. The minds of many of our fellow-countrymen are just now agitated by a desire for certain legislative changes, which (if I am to judge from the unanimous voice of our General Synod) are regarded by Irish Churchmen generally as pregnant with disastrous results. Now, regarding the present state of disquietude, not as partisans, but as ministers of Christ, we are bound, I think, to ask ourselves, in the sight of God, a serious question. In what spirit, and in what words should we approach those who differ from us on the subject? Are we to approach them as enemies and aliens? Let us be loyal, each of us, to our own convictions, and frankly make them known. Let us strive, if need be, by honest arguments to win others to what we believe to be truth. But let us not forget meanwhile that we have one God and Father of all, one Saviour, one Sanctifier, and let us remember too that we have one fatherland?

THE QUESTION OF THE DAY—STRANGE FALLACIES.

But if we are to grapple with the exigencies of the present crisis we must go further than this. "Fellow-countrymen," we may say, let us now take our stand on this common meeting place of patriotism, and let us reason together as to the special questions which are even now awaiting our decision. You are told by your advisers that Ireland needs a separate Legislature, in order that she may become a nation. Here is an appeal to your nationality. Let us see how much it is worth. Is not England a nation as distinguished from Scotland and Ireland; and yet she has no separate Legislature of her own. Is it not with Ireland even as with her? Both have an Imperial nationality as portions of the British Empire, and each has a separate national existence as well. But, again, you are told that you are now governed by England, and that a separate Legislature is necessary to free you from that yoke. It is not,

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perhaps, wonderful that such a statement should be accepted as true, because this monstrous fallacy that Ireland is governed by England has again and again found expression in the Press, not only in Ireland, but in England as well. But what is the fact? Ireland is governed by laws passed in an Imperial Parliament where Ireland has her legitimate voice, and often (because of the balance of parties) more than her legitimate influence. It follows that Ireland is no more governed by England than England is by Ireland.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

And what, it may be asked, is it that some would propose for the purpose of making Ireland a nation? What, for example, were the terms of the measure recently introduced into Parliament for this very purpose? That proposal would, as you know, have deprived us henceforward of any voice in the Imperial Parliament. The Government appointed by that Parliament to administer its laws would, so far as Ireland is concerned, be virtually a foreign Government. And yet to this Government would be entrusted the control of the Queen's forces.

A NATION WITHOUT AN ARMY.

Now, let us consider dispassionately what this means. It means that by this measure—designed, as it is said, to make a nation—we should be at once deprived of that prerogative of a nation which, in virtue of our imperial nationality, we have hitherto enjoyed—the possession and the disposal of an army to defend our shores. That army would no longer be ours. We should be expected to contribute towards its maintenance our money and our blood, and in return our English and Scotch neighbors might graciously send it over to protect us in time of need. But our relation to it as a nation would be gone for ever. That army would be sent over not merely to protect us, but to keep order in our land. And this would be done in pursuance of a measure which was intended to obviate the necessity of enforcing the law “under a foreign garb!” If we add to this the fact that, in accordance with the provisions of this measure, our Viceroy would be appointed, and a large portion of our taxes imposed, by this same foreign Government, surely we have before us, not the picture of an enfranchised people, but of a nation transformed into the position of a conquered and tributary province!

WHAT ARE THE GRIEVANCES?

“Fellow-countrymen!” we might well say in presence of such facts, are these the results which true patriotism should welcome? Is it not time to pause and ask whether this agitation is leading you, and whence it is derived? Has it sprung from yourselves, or is it the result of artificial pressure from without? If it be from yourselves what *are* the grievances under which you suffer, and which these changes would remove? In what respect is your liberty curtailed? What privileges enjoyed by Englishmen or Scotchmen are denied to you? You have been told that if Ireland had a separate Legislature you would be better off. Of course, if an Irish Parliament should allow you to obtain that which of right belongs to others, you might be better off as regards this world's wealth. But for the honor of our country and for your own good name such an idea ought not surely to be entertained. And if prosperity is

not to come from such a source, whence do you expect it? You know that capital will be driven from our shores. You have experienced already the distress caused by its withdrawal. Again would we ask you—apart from the incentives supplied by the speeches and newspaper articles of others—what reason for this change does your own experience supply? And if this movement has not sprung from yourselves, whence does it come, and with what motive is it promoted?

WHENCE COMES THE AGITATION?

There are, no doubt, among those who lead this movement many whose hearts are filled with a sincere desire to serve their country's weal, and who seek to do so within the limits of morality and religion. But that great power which—almost unseen itself—is pressing forward this movement from the background, and over which even your leaders have little control—those wild incentives to violence, and anarchy, and communism that reach you from the other side of the Atlantic—are they Irish in their source or in their character? Is their effect on our population such as to foster amongst them those moral, generous, and religious qualities for which Irishmen in the past have been so justly distinguished? Are your priests quite satisfied, in their hearts, with the results which these influences are already exercising? Do they look forward with unmixed complacency to the future? Have they no reason to fear least the effect of this agitation in the end should be to make Ireland at the last the prey of Continental Secularists and Communists—men whom the Church of Rome numbers among her most deadly foes, and who, having wafted their pernicious themes from Germany to America, are endeavoring now to find a place for them in our native land? This is a danger which—if it exists—it behoves the priests of the Church of Rome, and Irishmen of every class and creed, to avert; for disastrous, indeed, would be the day on which the "Isle of Saints" should allow herself to fall into such hands!

One word in conclusion. If we are, indeed, to be a power among our fellow-men at this present time, there is one indispensable condition of success. We must ourselves live very near to God. Our hearts must often be going up to Him in prayer. His Word must be our delight and constant guide. No noisy bluster, not learning, not eloquence, has chief power to mould the wills and hearts of men. A holy life and consistent walk—this it is that tells in the end.

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